

Dirt is the New Snow!

by Kevin Jordan

Dirt is the new snow in the summer time! I wish I coined this phrase, but it was on a T-shirt at our bike park, [Bike Snowmass](#). Bike parks are exploding at ski resorts across the country. Bike parks consist of [flow](#) or gravity-fed trails that offer features, much like you would see in a Terrain Park. If you love skiing and snowboarding, then you have to try downhill ([DH](#)) mountain biking! Now you can. PSIA-AASI-Rocky Mountain and Bike Snowmass have joined forces and are [offering a clinic](#) for its members this September 19-20, 2015.

Teaching for transfer and lateral learning is something that PSIA-AASI highlights in many of its clinic and education offerings. Now there is a clinic, open to members of any discipline, directly focusing on the parallels between DH mountain biking and sliding on snow. Participants will spend two days honing their DH mountain bike skills. They will also be exposed to the “behind the scenes” of an operational bike park. Participants will have an opportunity to ride with members of PSIA-AASI-RM’s education staff that also happen to be bike pros in the summer time.

The Sport:

Downhill or DH in the mountain bike genre is very similar to Freestyle or the Park and Pipe world of snowsports. In other words, you want guests to use the right equipment. When you cross country ski, you use lighter, skinnier skis that are built for speed. When you cross country bike, the same tenets hold true in terms of equipment. You ride lighter bikes that are built for climbing. When you downhill ski/ride, you use longer, heavier boards. When you venture into the Terrain Park, you use softer boots for alpine skiing and skis that have twin tips. When you downhill mountain bike, you use heavier bikes with lots (and I mean lots) of suspension. However, there are also Slopestyle bikes and “dirt jumper” bikes which are even more specialized.



One of the biggest difference between skiing/riding and mountain biking has to do with the trail. On a ski/snowboard trail, the participant gets to choose where they go. On a mountain bike trail, the trail dictates where you go. If the trail goes to the left, guess what? You are making a left turn. Granted, there is some variation in the line of a DH trail and pro riders will take advantage of this, but there is less real estate than a groomed, blue slope with snow on it!

The Progression:

Over the seasons, the Bike School at Bike Snowmass has come up with a progression that is very successful amongst its guests. Just like you ramp up terrain in the winter starting with the easiest terrain first, you do the same with bike school students. Everyone starts out learning the basics or the ABCs. Then you head to a skills park or a version of “dirt” terrain based learning. Once you dial in the ABCs and students are ready, you head down the beginner trail, aptly named Verde (Spanish for green).



What are the ABCs? How do you teach people to ski and ride? First, you introduce them to their equipment and get them comfortable with it. Next, you teach them how to stop and turn. You do the exact same thing in the bike school! First, introduce them to “A” or the Action Stance. Here you focus on how to balance over your downhill bike. The focus is on standing up, with level pedals, and having your hips off the seat. Next, introduce “B” for braking or how to stop. Focus on the powerful hydraulic brakes and a braking position that assists the guest when applying the brakes. It is also important to differentiate stopping and riding with the brakes applied which allows students to slowly roll down the trail. Finally, it is on to “C” for cornering or turning. Here you stress the importance of tipping the bike more than the body. Pretty soon everyone is shredding or carving the brown POW!

Let’s ride!:

So as the seasons shift from summer to fall and you begin to think about winter, shift gears with us (pun intended)! Roll with us this September and jump start your season with this [unique clinic offering](#) from PSIA-AASI-RM and Bike Snowmass! You will see first-hand why dirt is the new snow!



Photo Credits: Abby Eagye, Tim Kenney